16: Hanks & Hanks E,P-4,5 (1938-1941) 1950
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objects that circulate, and this places the Blackfoot at a disadvantage when dealing with Indians from other reserves where a relatively larger portion of the wealth is exchangeable. Hence on reserves with broader ranges of income wealthy Indians may outdisplay the reputedly wealthy Blackfoot. To save face, the latter use part of their precious cash for inter-reserve gifts. Hence the Blackfoot are fundamentally dependent on currency to supply not only the demands of whites but also the demands of outside Indians.

Distributing Mechanisms

The present distributing mechanisms on the reserve may be divided into two groups: (1) those mechanisms introduced by the agency associated chiefly with production on the reserve; (2) those which are retained, though perhaps in a modified form, from the social fabric of pre-reserve days.

Most of the productive system introduced by the agency also acts as a distributive system furnishing to some extent jobs for persons not directly engaged in production. The various deductions from the sale of commodities, for threshing grain or for wintering calves, and the portion of the mine income devoted to maintenance provide additional jobs of a service category. Similarly the hay collected is paid for out of the gross receipts of cattle owners and goes to the harvesters or transporters. In this sense the agency hospital, the police system, and the numerous other activities in which Indians are employed for varying periods, constitute a portion of the distributive system.

A system of distribution for which the trust fund is indirectly responsible is the transfer of certain kinds of property at death. It will be recalled that there are two kinds of property: (1) work horses, wagons, land, houses, and cattle which are non-exchangeable; (2) other objects which may be disposed of without limitations, i.e., range horses, furniture, sacred bundles, and most things that have not been purchased at trust expense. Farm implements, if purchased by one's own funds, may or may not be considered as disposable property, depending on whether the agent feels that the transfer would affect the general welfare of the reserve. Certainly should this disposal bring disuse, it would be forbidden by the agent.

To guard against the uncontrolled transfer of property at death the agent has encouraged written wills. The Indians themselves had a kind of will wherein a dying man bequeathed his property in the

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which he raised and trained to the saddle. He had three men more or less constantly with him. They and their wives were provided with meals, lodging, spending money, and the use of horses. In addition he provided for five old people who had no other means of support. They lived in houses near him, were given occasional blankets and clothing, accompanied him when he went to the Sun Dance or the Tobacco Dance, where they lived in his tipi and were given, when occasion demanded, groceries over and above the rations. While their grandsons drove the horses into the corral, these old dependents passed the afternoon swapping stories with Boy Chief. We estimate that on the reserve there are five such systems of economic flow centring about an entrepreneur.

These entrepreneurs may be considered the lingering exemplifications of the old band system. Like them the old band chiefs would provide a source of income for their bands: it might be harvesting with hay, planting gardens, running a ferry, or extracting coal. To the band chief came young men who performed the main tasks involved in return for their keep and, when necessary, for the clothing and feeding of their relatives. With the advent of the farms and the scattering of people over the reserve, these bands dissipated, so that the system persists today only in a few cases, though it continues as an ideal for many entrepreneurs. The band is now almost a meaningless concept to those under thirty; it is solely a named section in the brief annual circle camp where an individual sets his tent. The function of the band as a distributive system has been assumed by the family. It assumes a characteristic pattern when the head of a prosperous family has his circle of dependent relatives who furnish him a market for generosity in return for homage. This function of the family differs from that of the entrepreneurs in that the entrepreneur may provide for persons outside the family group. The main trend today is away from the entrepreneur system towards having each family care for its own members.

In addition to providing for its indigents, the family contains a system of relationships to its own members that makes for distribution. We need not describe here in detail the Blackfoot kinship system[1] with its various obligations, but a few examples will illustrate. We have already noted that kinship may be a prerequisite for one Indian to hire another. A haying gang consists frequently of a man with horses and wagons helped by his younger brothers,

[1]For analysis of the Blackfoot kinship system, cf. L. M. Hanks, Jr. and Jane Richardson, "Blackfoot Kinship," American Ethnological Society, Monograph IX, 1945.

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602 brothers-in-law, and sons. One's generosity is shown by fine gifts
43 to a father-in-law and a mother-in-law, and by treating one's younger
466 brother in school to a movie. Wives buy things not only for their
602 children but for their sisters' children. A man invites his brother-
431 in-law to dine at a Chinese restaurant. All of these cases reveal segments of the intra-familial system of circulating wealth.

To estimate the amount of wealth per year passing through the family is difficult. Part of the groceries, clothing, and household expenses passes through this channel. More than half of the gifts that are made go to relatives. In terms of volume the family is probably the most important distributive mechanism on the reserve, even more important than the agency.

593 Near extinction, though not completely dead, is the institution
858 of the favoured child (*mini.puka*) which centres about the family.
431 Horses and blankets were given out lavishly in the name of the child. A wealthy father rewarded many times over the giver of a gift to his favourite child. A trifling object such as a bell might in the past be rewarded with a horse or a suit of buckskin clothing. Thus the favoured child institution was a special aspect of distribution where generosity was reciprocated by generosity without possibility of
593 comparable return. Though there are many who have been favoured
858 children in the past, only two children have that status today. The
177 schools are blamed for this because the children are taken away from their parents. The children themselves, caught in the set of values established by the school, no longer seek the favours that Indian parents give. A lad who has spent twelve years under Anglican or Roman Catholic influence finds it difficult to appreciate the gift of a Medicine Pipe and asks to be spared the honour.

585 Marriage may constitute a mechanism of distribution, if one of
431 the Blackfoot patterns is followed. Of three first marriages observed, one followed this pattern. The main feature is an exchange of presents between the two contracting families. The bride's family in a recent marriage gave eight horses which they had collected from various relatives. The groom's family, obligated to an equal return gift, could only collect six horses; accordingly a "democrat" and a wardrobe were thrown in. As far as possible those relatives who contributed are given something in return; the immediate family must go without in case of inadequate return gift, while the more distant relatives receive in proportion to their contributions. Among